

November 19, 2004

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman  
United States Senator  
SH-706 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-0703

Dear Senator Lieberman:

We are writing to bring to your attention to a document that surfaced in the recent appeals filed with the Interior Board of Indian Appeals (IBIA) by the Webster/Dudley Nipmuc Band (Petitioner 69B) in light of the ongoing Congressional review of the tribal recognition process.

On September 23, 2004, the two competing Bands of Nipmuc petitioners for tribal recognition filed requests for reconsideration with the IBIA. Those requests have now been docketed for review on the merits. The 17-page brief filed by the Webster/Dudley Nipmuc Band included an unsigned four-page letter written on Office of the Secretary letterhead and addressed to Dr. Michael L. Lawson, the lead researcher for the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band (Petitioner 69A) and former Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) employee. The Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band is backed by Lyle Berman, CEO of Lakes Gaming Inc. and former business partner of David Anderson who currently heads the BIA.

This letter raises a number of serious questions about possible communications between federal officials and tribal petitioners. Some particularly troubling passages from the purported letter include:

“Mike, your efforts should not be trying to salvage 69A but instead focusing on Berman’s objectives by identifying controlling factors in 69B.”

“Find a way ... to infiltrate Petitioner 69B. If successful, they would need to secure several or ideally the majority of the positions in that governing body for Berman to have the same level of control.”

“If you could remove one or some portion of the principal families from 69B and shift them to 69A it would create instability for 69B. This tactic is very common among factional petitioners with continuous unrest e.g. The Schaghticoke Nation of Connecticut.”

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This letter presents a very troubling picture of a process that already is regarded with great skepticism and concern by the people of Connecticut. We hope this information is helpful to the Congressional review of the tribal recognition process and look forward to working with you to bring fundamental and far-reaching reform to the tribal recognition process.

Very truly yours,

Richard Blumenthal  
Attorney General

Jeff Benedict  
President, Connecticut  
Alliance Against Casino  
Expansion